The Territory Government today invited Territorians to comment on the draft Native Vegetation Management Bill and draft Bill to amend the Pastoral Land Act.

Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage Karl Hampton said both Bills recognise and support land management practices for the 21st Century.

“The Territory Government believes in protecting the environment and the pastoral industry and that’s why we have developed landmark legislation to achieve this goal,” Mr Hampton said.

“This legislative reform will ensure we don’t make the same mistakes of our southern counterparts so that we keep our landscapes and ecosystems healthy.

“To do this we will need to make sure land clearing occurs in the right spots, for the best benefits and at a pace we can properly monitor under a simplified approvals process.

“The two Bills implement this Government’s climate change commitment to be a low land clearing jurisdiction and establishes safety nets for retaining vegetation.

“Pastoral lands cover almost half the Territory and this legislative reform will lead to more certainty and protection of our $260 million pastoral industry by diversifying pastoral enterprises and implementing stronger safeguards to better protect the environment.

“The limits we set on land clearing will operate fairly to Indigenous land holders who may have future development aspirations but are not in a position to develop right now.

“Part of this Government’s reform of land management also includes Government negotiating improved public access to pastoral lands with improved recreational fishing just one example.

“The draft legislation is the product of extensive consultation conducted over several years with key stakeholders and having listened to all the views presented, we have come up with a sensible package of reforms.

“I invite all Territorians to have their say on the proposed Bills before 31 May 2011 by going to www.nt.gov.au/consult”

Mr Hampton said there will be community forums next month in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Timber Creek and Alice Springs.

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